

Stuttgart signal Soldier earns Armywide 'best of best' award

By 2nd Lt. Frank Hauben
587th Signal Company

"I want you to be the best," Staff Sgt. Andrew Myers of the 587th Signal Company told his supply clerk-turned-armorer, Sgt. Joseph Young.

Young took this challenge to heart, working long hours to make his arms room look the best it possibly could.

He made sure every weapon was clean and every form was perfect. He memorized the regulations and spent countless hours cleaning, oiling and caring for his weapons.

In other words, he became the best – not just in the battalion, or even in Europe, but the best armorer in the U.S. Army.

Young's effort was officially recognized Aug. 20, when he crossed the stage in Alexandria, Va., and accepted his award as the "Best of the Best" Armorer in the Army.

Young earned this award following a rigorous series of inspections at every echelon from company to Department of the Army.

Additional awards

The 587th Sig. Co. sets the bar high for a Soldier hoping to be recognized for his or her accomplishments.

Myers, the company's supply sergeant, demands excellence from both himself and his Soldiers.

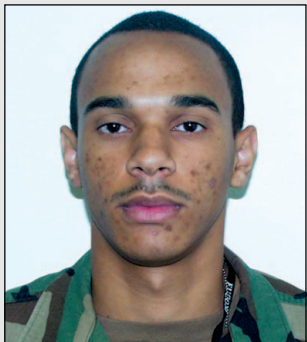
This year, Myers and his supply section reaped the rewards of efforts sewn into their everyday jobs.

For the second year in a row, the company's parent unit, the 52nd Signal Battalion, earned a Department of the Army Award for Maintenance Excellence due in part to the hard work and dedication of Meyers and his support personnel.

Fresh off the heels of the AAME award announcement – and the day after Young accepted his "Best of the Best" award – Myers, Young, Sgt. Aaron Clark, Sgt. Kerry Harmon and Cpl. Ray Martin were informed that their unit had also won the Army Chief of Staff Supply Excellence Award.

As these accomplishments prove, the 587th Signal Company supply section takes pride in its job, and each team member contributes greatly to the company's overall mission.

To earn these awards, the company's supply personnel simply accepted Myer's challenge to "be the best."



Young

Home sweet home school

More military families opting out of traditional learning route

By Maria Higgins

Adored by their teacher, showered with personal attention and given a large say in each day's lesson plan, 11-year-old twins Zach and Josh Millander would be the envy of their sixth-grade class.

That is, if they had one.

Instead, the Millander boys — along with their 6-year-old brother, Caleb — hit the books each day as part of a growing number of home schoolers, children who are educated not by certified teachers in formal settings but by dedicated parents in their own home.

A concept that's catching on

Throughout the nation and among families of various social and religious demographics, home schooling is on the rise, according to the Home School Legal Defense Association.

The Virginia-based advocacy group reports that the number of home-schooled children in America is increasing between 7 and 15 percent annually.

Parents who home school typically cite numerous reasons for their decision.

A May 2002 poll of nearly a thousand HSLDA members found that almost half were compelled to guide their children's education due to religious concerns.

Also behind the trend: Traditional schools themselves are earning failing grades from home schooling proponents. Many are motivated to keep their kids home because of what they see as a plague of overcrowding and understaffing, standardized test-obsessed curricula and amped-up student violence.

And it doesn't just take a Columbine tragedy to steer parents toward home schooling.

Karenmarie Collins (or K, as she prefers to be called) and her Marine Corps husband, Wayne, were "shocked" by administrators' ignorance when they tried to register their firstborn son, Bryan, for kindergarten in California. School officials "couldn't tell us what he would be learning, and worse, they were surprised that we would want to know," K said.

The couple kept Bryan home that year, then were transferred to North Carolina. But — believing that school was a "rite of passage" for children — they tried to enroll him for first grade at their new district. When they got an encore dispassionate response, they found themselves forced to reevaluate "what education meant," and another home-school family was born.

Today, the Collinses are dedicated to the cause and active in the Stuttgart Area Home School Association.

So, too, are Deb and Red Millander, who committed to home schooling when it was clear that their elementary school wouldn't be able to teach anything substantial to their gifted twins (already reading at age 3).

In South Carolina, the school's curriculum focused on "bringing out your inner self — in other words, just playing," Deb recalled. When a much wealthier school district in Rhode Island proved equally unchallenging, the Millanders saw the writing on the wall.

Mobility, stability

Often, the perceived benefits of home schooling motivate as powerfully as formal schools' alleged shortcomings.

"We've got the flexibility to pick up and go according to our business needs, and take vacations when it's convenient for us," said Becky Dean, who, with her four children, chose to come to Germany with her husband, Army Reservist Tom Dean, despite this being an unaccompanied tour.

"We'll just pack up some of the books and make it a learn-as-you-go field trip," Becky said. In prepara-

This is the first of a two-part look at home schooling in a military community. Part II will appear in the Nov. 4 edition of The Citizen.

Home Schooling Online

Both religious- and secular-based Web sites for home-schooling families abound.

Services provided by the following sites range from championing home schoolers in court to linking parents with curriculum providers, fellow home schoolers, research results, events and more:

Home School Legal Defense Association
www.hslda.org

The Home School Foundation
www.homeschoolfoundation.org

National Home Education Network
www.nhen.org

American Homeschool Association
www.americanhomeschoolassociation.org

Home School Learning Network
www.homeschoollearning.com



tion for an upcoming trip to Paris, the Deans are scouring books and videos on the City of Lights, and "having lots of discussions about what the kids will be seeing in the Louvre," she said with a laugh.

As an Air Force family that has moved six times in seven years, the Millanders find home schooling to be a stabilizing force in their children's lives.

"They know who their teacher and classmates are going to be," said Deb, "and the boys can keep making steady progress despite going from the Deep South to the Midwest to the East Coast and back again."

Until her husband, a pilot, sees his career slow down, "this is the right way for us," Deb said.

It's also the right way for kids to grow up, the Collinses believe.

A proper environment

"Public school lobbyists and other advocates criticize home school for not being a proper environment for kids," said K, who disagrees with this stance.

"I believe schools are contrary to what's best for them," K said. "The center of their world should be family, not an institution where they're made to feel part of a group [at the expense of] developing a sense of their individuality."

The Collinses agree with proponents' claims that home schooling's nature allows individuality to foster.

Zach Millander experienced just that after a recent family trip to Rothenberg-ob-der-Tauber and its famous Museum of Torture. "My mom made me write a report about it," Zach said, but noted that he got to call the shots on the exact topic.

Follow-up essays are standard with the Millanders, who only wanted to make sure their boys had been paying attention the first time Deb and Red made the request. "Now, they don't even have to be asked—they'll pick something they liked best and write about it in their journals," Deb explained.

For Becky Dean, the beauty of home school is that "it can meet everyone's needs at different points," she said. "It all depends on what's best for *your* child."

For more information on the Stuttgart Area Home School Association, call Madelyn Johns at 0712-723-7088, or e-mail 6m1@hotmail.com.